

HOW TO SPREAD THE WORD
OF GOD IN JAPAN.

BY

Rev. S. S. SNYDER.



YOKOHAMA.

—
1899.

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A LITTLE over three months ago I decided to open, in connection with our Industrial Home, in Sendai a book-store for the sale of Bibles and other Christian books. I am glad to say that at the end of three months we could report that 50 *Yen* worth of books had been sold.

No sooner was the store started than I began to think that these books should be on sale at the largest book-stores of the city, and at all other places where we have evangelistic work being done. I had my helper write to five of the leading stores asking when it would be convenient for me to call upon them, or

for them to call upon me to consult about the matter.

It was just before dinner when I sent a boy out with the notes. Before dinner was over the owner of one of the stores came, asking to make arrangements at once for the sale of the Bibles. Now they are on sale at five of the leading book stores of the city, as well as at our Industrial Home, at one other preaching place and the former depository. Also a number of our evangelists are arranging to have them on sale where they are working, and before long I hope they will be on sale at every place where our evangelists work.

Also I thought they ought to be on sale at other places, even in every little town throughout the land. Near Sendai is Hanabuchi. A smaller, more dirty, naked and ignorant village cannot be found in Japan? At their one little store I

asked to deposit a few scripture portions for sale. The owner gladly consented; and after they had had the books for about ten days I inquired what they had done. They had sold *thirteen*.

Afterward at a little country way-side tea-house I asked to put them on sale. They agreed; and a few days later when I again passed by they had sold three. I am sure they can be put on sale, *yes and sold*, at hundreds of book-stores and tea-houses throughout this land, if we only take the trouble to do it.

I also found that by having them at my own home I am enabled to sell a large number to callers, the old fish woman, the vegetable dealer, the student, all these need the Bible with a personal word.

When Paul was writing to the elders of Ephesus he spoke of teaching them publicly and *from house*.

to house. It is after speaking of this that he calls them to witness that he is “*pure from the blood of all men.*” So I thought that the Bible should be carried to the people in their own homes. I have sold in Sendai as many as 7 Testaments or portions in 10 calls, and in Yokohama I did still better. At one place they were so very ready to buy that I was surprised. On inquiry I found that their little boy was attending one of our Sunday Schools and so the parents were prepared to buy a New Testament.

But it is especially of my work upon the trains that I wish to tell. Last winter, I had to go to Tokyo and as I was hurriedly packing, I threw about 15 Scripture portions in my grip thinking I might be able to sell them upon the train. I tried; and almost before I began they were all sold. Before returning I went to

a book-store and had faith(?) to buy 25. Again I tried and again they were gone in just a few minutes. When the last one had been handed out an old woman asked, "Haven't you got any more?" How can I describe to you the terrible feeling of condemnation that came over me as I stood before that poor woman asking for the Word of God and I did not have it to give to her? Yes, and in all those other cars were others just as ready to buy!

The next time I took 82,—all that I had at my home, and sold them by passing through about two thirds of the train. A few days ago from Sendai to Tokyo I sold over 100.

Near Tokyo I called upon one of our evangelists urging him to push the Bible selling. He told me that it could be done in country places like Sendai but not in central places like Tokyo, and Yokohama. Early

the next morning I had to ride in the *basha* (a small coach): I was tired and the coach was noisy, but at last my sachel was opened. I sold 9 portions and one Testament in that little vehicle. That afternoon between Tokyo and Yokohama in one hour I sold 76. In three trips 192. The next day 413. More recently in one day, going back and forth between the same cities eight times, I sold 639, ten of which were New Testament. In five consecutive days I sold 1713, including 39 Testaments. Going to Karuizawa on the train I sold 282. I often sell three or four portions to one person. In one car where there were only 11 Japanese I sold 28.

I have now procured a permit from the mayor's office in Sendai to sell Bibles in any part of Japan. It cost me $5\frac{1}{2}$ *sen* ($2\frac{1}{2}$ cents).

Taking my stand in the middle of

the cars I have spoken to hundreds and hundreds of attentive people. In the last few months I have seen thousands of willing and hundreds of anxious hands being held out for the Word of God.

There is a most terrible famine in the land. There have been famines in other lands, and we have gladly given of our means to relieve the sufferers. But here and now is a terrible *famine of the Word of God!* We have the bread of life and have the power to give it to them. *Will we do so?*

This selling gives such good opportunities for direct evangelistic work. It is difficult to find a better subject for a conversation than the Word of God. On the way to Karuizawa I sold three portions to the superintendent of the Aomori Normal School; and then he was anxious to talk with me about Christianity. I

sell to one half the Buddhist priests that I meet upon the trains.

And it is such a good opportunity to set Japanese Christians to work. One young man told me that he was on his way home and that he was the only Christian in his town. After talking with him of how we ought to work for the salvation of others, he bought 10 portions to use among his friends.

Some missionaries lament the lack of life among the Japanese Christians. If we set them a good example, doing far over and beyond that for which we are paid as missionaries we can be sure that they will follow, and thus the great difficulty will be overcome.

In the five years that I have been here nothing has pained me more than to hear from old missionaries about what they used to do in the selling of Scriptures, and to see so

few doing it now. Then the colporters also were going up and down through the length and breadth of the land, selling the Word on all hands. That was when hundreds of believers came in for baptism. Can it be possible that there was some connection between the two? Does it not seem that of late we have laid too little stress upon the Word of God? It is His Word that is not to return void, and we can be sure that, if we put it into the hands of the people, He will honor it.

In this work we need earnestness, zeal and joy. We have no time to be sour. “Ask and ye shall receive that your *joy* may be full.” Our love for the people and the work must not be warm, or even hot. It must be *white hot*. To go to the people in this way makes us humble. It takes away all pride to ask a man to pay one *sen* for a little Scripture

portion. But are we in earnest? Do we believe that there is only one Savior, and that He has told us to tell these people of the glorious salvation in Him?

It has been suggested, that we should wait for invitations, and not go till the people invite us. Is that the teaching of Jesus? Yonder house is on fire! Even the wife and children are in danger of death! Shall we wait till they ask for help? What matters it if one cannot speak their language very well? The language of the *heart* is one, the world over. We may make mistakes, but, if they see that we are overflowing with love for them, they will understand. If I, with my little knowledge of the language, have been able to sell so many, what could not older missionaries do, who are able to speak the language so well?

Of course Satan will oppose. He

terribly fears the Word of God. The other day in coming here he did his best to persuade me not to enter a car where was sitting a foreigner who knew the language quite well. But at last into the car I went and spoke to the people. As soon as I had finished, an elder of one of our churches spoke up telling of our work, that he himself is a Christian, and urged them to investigate the teaching of Jesus. Of the four other men in the car, three bought New Testaments, and one took three portions, while the elder took twenty.

We are weak and in our own strength can do very little, but a *strong arm* is with us conquering and to conquer. Can not each missionary in Japan make a special effort this year to have the Bible put on sale in many places in his neighbourhood, to have it sold from house to house, to sell it in his own home,

to sell on trains, in street cars and wherever we go? If we do this we can be assured that the rich blessing of God will not be withheld. The little cloud has appeared. Shall we prepare to receive the great shower of blessing.

